

**Quality Deer Management Initiative
Covering Deer Management Unit 017
Sponsored by EUP Wildlife Coalition
April 9, 2004**

Executive Summary

The Eastern Upper Peninsula Wildlife Coalition (EUPWC) proposes to establish a five-year mandatory quality deer management program in DNR Deer Management Unit (DMU) 017 for the purposes of creating an older buck age structure (protecting most one and one-half year old bucks) and a deer herd with a balanced sex, and age structure, and in balance with its habitat.

Background Information

EUPWC is an active wildlife management association covering parts of Chippewa and Mackinaw counties of the Eastern Upper Peninsula. EUPWC is a coalition of members affiliated with outdoor clubs and groups from across the eastern UP, including the clubs of the 450 member Tri-County Wildlife Unlimited, the Soo Area Sportsmens Club, the Les Cheneaux Sportsman Club, the St. Mary's River Sportsmans Club, the Chippewa County Shooting Association, the Straits Area Sportsmens Club, various state of Michigan branches of the Quality Deer Management Association, and other area outdoor clubs.

EUPWC operates as a non-profit corporation in the State of Michigan with Mr. Dale Batka of Cedarville, Michigan as its President. A nine person board of directors works with President Batka in managing the affairs of EUPWC.

Quality Deer Management (QDM) Proposal

EUPWC proposes to establish a five-year mandatory QDM program in accordance with DNR "Procedure for Initiation, Evaluation, and Review of Mandatory Quality Deer Management Proposals," dated September 9, 1999 (hereafter called QDM regulations). The area proposed to be covered by this program is DMU 017 as defined by the DNR.

Preliminary Measure of Support

QDM regulations require a preliminary measure of support to be included with the draft proposal for a QDM program. EUPWC is the sponsoring organization for this proposal and offers its full support for this program to meet the preliminary measure of support requirements as defined in the regulations. EUPWC is also following a QDM project sponsored by the Tri-County Wildlife Unlimited group two years ago. In that project, which is similar to this project, support for the QDM proposal was significant, with over 57% of the landowners and 52% of the hunters showing support for the proposal.

Statement of Purpose

EUPWC's statement of purpose for its proposed QDM program is as follows:

The mission of the EUPWC's Quality Deer Management program is to assist the Department of Natural Resources in managing the white-tailed deer herd in the Eastern Upper Peninsula to create an older buck age structure (protecting about 80% of the one and one-half year old bucks) such that the population of the herd in the eastern UP is much more like it would be naturally without excessive harvesting of one and one-half year old bucks. EUPWC would also like to achieve a better buck to doe sex ratio and to support the DNR in achieving an appropriate antlerless deer harvest designed to achieve the above population goals. EUPWC recognizes that the NRC has final authority on antlerless harvest quotas.

Secondary goals of the program are to (1) promote the notion of stewardship, and (2) promote efforts to improve the quality of deer habitat management practices among the landowner and the deer hunting population in the area through expanded educational opportunities for landowners and hunters. EUPWC also hopes to educate the hunting public about options for reducing button buck harvests on a voluntary basis as another management technique for increasing the number of bucks in the herd.

EUPWC has already conducted several deer management seminars across the Eastern UP and intends to continue this practice over the next year.

Proposed Regulation

EUPWC proposes that its QDM program include a mandatory harvest restriction on bucks such that they must have at least three points on one side to be a legal buck, each of the three points being at least one inch in length. A second buck harvested would have to have four points on a side, as is the case with existing regulations.

EUPWC believes this proposed regulation is a reasonable regulation because the regulation protects about 80% of the one and one-half year old bucks (based on data summarized in the QDM regulations) and it is easily enforced by law enforcement officers, relative to other more complex harvest restriction alternatives (like antler spread size). This proposal meets the requirements in the QDM regulations that the proposed regulation must protect at least 50% of the yearling bucks.

As a part of this QDM experiment, the sponsors propose to allow an exemption for hunters who have not yet reached their 17th birthday. Under this exemption, these youthful hunters may legally harvest any buck with 3" spikes or longer on their first buck tag and they must follow the standard rules for harvesting a second buck - four points on a side.

The purpose of this component is to address the issue raised by some members of the public during the previous QDM public hearings in DMU 017 that QDM rules may discourage youthful hunters. EUPWC also proposes this component because no other mandatory QDM program in Michigan has experimented with the youthful hunter exemption. Such exemptions are common in voluntary QDM programs and this experiment would allow the DNR and state hunters to experience first hand, this concept for the first time in the state.

Regulation Summary

The proposed regulation can be summarized in these two points:

1. An antler restriction of three points on one side of three inches or more, each point consisting of one inch or longer.
- 2) Youth hunters who have not reached their 17th birthday are exempt from this regulation and may follow state guidelines in the proposed QDM unit.

Proposed Method of Evaluation

During the 2004 hunting seasons (one year prior to implementation), EUPWC members will work collaboratively with DNR Wildlife Staff to ensure that harvest data, satisfactory to the DNR is collected to establish baseline data for evaluating the proposal's effectiveness and to comply with DNR QDM guidelines. EUPWC also agrees to promote the collection of deer data among their members and the general public. EUPWC plans to collect this data primarily at deer processing operations using individuals trained in deer aging techniques (or by collecting deer heads for aging by DNR staff). EUPWC will use this collection process to add to deer harvest data collected by DNR staff at check stations to ensure that together, EUPWC and the DNR collect the required baseline data of 100 bucks and 200 antlerless deer.

The sponsor will work cooperatively with the DNR throughout the remainder of the project (evaluation years 2-5, hunting seasons 2005-2009) to ensure that the progress of the project is evolving toward the accomplishment of its mission.

Project Director and Commitment

Establishing a five-year mandatory QDM program, in accordance with DNR regulations, requires a seven-year commitment for successful completion. EUPWC is committed to carrying out this project and has named Mr. Leon E. Hank of Holt, Michigan as its Project Director, responsible for direct contact with DNR personnel. Mr. Hank has been very active in QDM activities on a national, statewide and local level since 1996 and he

makes a personal commitment that he will work diligently to meet the objectives of the project.

Timeline and Project Dates

The sponsors agree to follow the dates for implementation of the proposal as contained in Table 1 of the QDM regulations. EUPWC would like to begin implementation of the QDM program with the 2005 hunting season, if the public survey of support is met.

EUPWC and its project director plan to begin holding additional educational meetings on the proposal as soon as possible, holding a reasonable number of both educational workshops and public hearings on the proposal before the survey in Winter 2004-05.

EUPWC stands ready to revise this proposal as necessary to meet the requirements of the DNR and the QDM regulation.